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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a collaborative employment placement and training structure which provides a flexible format for implementing various natural support models for the employment of individuals with severe disabilities. A team approach is used to develop and implement job assessment, training, and follow-up activities. Each team may be composed of the person to be employed, the employer or designated representative, the family or designated representative, and the vocational services agency. Primary team activities include job development, on-the-job assessment, identification and recruitment of necessary outside resources, job training, and job follow-up. Each activity may be delegated to team members according to their team-defined roles and responsibilities. Through the collaborative employment placement and training approach, the experience, expertise, and effort of each team member are used to the maximum extent in job training and placement. The role of the educational or vocational services agency changes from that of a provider of services to that of a facilitative consultant, providing instructional expertise to supplement the expertise and experience of the employer, family, and other team members. Implications for educational and vocational services agencies are suggested, and long-term ramifications for ongoing team interactions and potential quality of life changes are discussed. (Contains 14 references.) (Author/JDD)

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COLLABORATIVE EMPLOYMENT PLACEMENT AND TRAINING: A STRUCTURE TO SUPPORT THE EMPLOYMENT OF PERSONS WITH SEVERE DISABILITIES

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RUNNING HEAD: Collaborative Employment Placement and Training

Submitted in January 1993 to The ERIC Clearinghouse on Handicapped and Gifted Children

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Abstract

The Supported Work Model (Wehman & Kregel, 1985) has provided a basic process through which the employment of increasing numbers of persons with severe disabilities has occurred within the past decade. However, a number of problems with the exclusive use of job coaches to provide job site training and follow-up support have been identified and several natural support alternatives have been suggested (Nisbet & Hagner, 1988). This article presents a collaborative employment placement and training structure which provides a flexible format for implementing various natural support models using a team approach to developing and implementing job assessment, training, and follow-up activities. Each team may be composed of the person to be employed, the employer or their representative, the family or their representative, and the vocational services agency. Primary team activities include job development, on-the-job assessment, identification and recruitment of necessary outside resources, job training, and job follow-up. Each activity may be delegated to team members according to their team defined roles and responsibilities. Through the collaborative employment placement and training approach the experience, expertise, and effort of each team member is used to the maximum extent in job training and placement. Implications for educational and vocational services agencies are suggested and long term ramifications are provided for ongoing team interactions and potential quality of life changes.

COLLABORATIVE EMPLOYMENT PLACEMENT AND TRAINING: A STRUCTURE TO SUPPORT THE EMPLOYMENT OF PERSONS WITH SEVERE DISABILITIES

The Supported Work Model (Wehman & Kregel, 1985) has provided a basic process through which the employment of increasing numbers of persons with severe disabilities has occurred within the past decade. The following four program components comprise the model including: (a) job placement; (b) job site training and advocacy; (c) on-going assessment; and (d) job retention and follow-up (p. 5). These components present a cogent sequence and structure for providing systematic instructional strategies permitting data-based decision making and fading of the outside resource (job coach, etc.) as the person acquires the necessary job skills and behaviors.

However, this process may lead to the long term presence of the outside resource (job coach, etc.) at the employment site, since persons with severe disabilities typically require long term training to acquire new skills and behaviors (Brown, et al., 1983). The long-term training may result in a situation where the employer is dependent on the job coach for supervision as well as training; where the person is dependent on the job coach for directions and interaction; and/or where the parents may depend on the job coach to assure the person's safety and security (Wehman & Hill, 1980). In some situations, the job coach may become dependent on the job site, creating a form of reverse dependency (Nisbet & Hagner, 1988).

In addition to the job site instructional responsibilities of the job coach, they may become involved in a number of noninstructional interventions (Nisbet & Hagner, 1988) including: "(a) establishing rapport with supervisors and co-workers; (b) explaining training techniques and involving supervisors and co-workers in training; (c) explaining the worker's disability, background, and behavioral characteristics to co-workers; and (d) encouraging co-workers to socialize with the worker and modeling appropriate ways of doing it."

(p. 260-261). The job coach may also be responsible for communicating with residences, arranging transportation, working on additional skills, e.g. banking, and coordinating services with other agencies or individuals. In short, the job coach may be required to "leap tall buildings in a single bound" possibly with little or no previous experience, several days of inservice training, and typically poor pay and benefits to provide a foundation for their efforts. These and a number of other possible difficulties with the exclusive use of job coaches (see Nisbet & Hagner, 1988) have led several sources (Nisbet & Callahan, 1987; Nisbet & Hagner, 1988; Shafer, et al., 1989; Rusch & Menchetti, 1981) to question whether such an outside resource provides the least intrusive, most efficient and effective means of providing job training and follow-up.

Recently, a number of authors (e.g. McFadden & Burke, 1991; Smull & Bellamy, 1989) have advocated that a "paradigm shift" occur whereby the current "program paradigm" should be replaced by a "support paradigm" (Smull & Bellamy, 1989, p.5&6) that "looks to the resources of the individual's community, and then develops flexible supports that allow participation in the community in response to individual choices. The needed shift is from a paradigm of community programs to a paradigm of individual supports." (Smull & Bellamy, 1989, p.6) In an employment context such a paradigm shift may result in a process in which "support system interventions can be designed to build upon and augment the natural process and interactions with community businesses rather than replace or short-circuit them" (Nisbet & Hagner, 1988, p. 261).

Nisbet and Hagner (1988) have indicated that such an individual natural support system may be developed using a variety of arrangements that may include one or more of the following: "(a) the Mentor Option, (b) the Training Consultant Option, (c) the Job Sharing Option, and (d) the Attendant Option" (pp. 263-264). However, each of these models, as presented, relies to some extent on the funding, supervision, and/or coordination from an external vocational services

agency (p. 265). At issue is the structure in which these models function: whether all possible natural supports, e.g. coworkers, parents, friends, the person, are to be utilized in the job placement, training, and follow-up process?, or whether the process continues to be largely driven by the vocational services agency with the cooperation of the employer?

Two central questions to ask when developing an employment opportunity for a person with a severe disability are: (a) who should make time, effort, and monetary investments in the natural support process?; and (b) who will benefit from the outcomes of the natural support process? Within the old service paradigm the vocational services agency provided much of the effort needed to place, train, and support the person on the job. The benefits to the agency were "a placement" for which they received government funding and could expand services, and for which vocational rehabilitation received "a closure" (Shafer, 1988, p. 62). For natural supports to succeed it is imperative that the business, the parents, local community members or friends, the vocational services agency, and the person understand that they need to provide individual and collective investments in the job placement, training, and follow-up support process. The payoffs for their investments will fit their role in the person's working life, such as fulfillment of personnel needs, increased financial independence, friendships, self-fulfillment, additional family money, and at the very least, a placement.

Given the need for varied investments of time, energy, thought, and funding from key players in the person's employment, it is necessary that a structure and format be developed in which each significant person contributes according to their role while sharing responsibilities with other team members through role release (Lyon & Lyon, 1980) when possible. In doing so each team member provides services according to their experience and expertise, thus learning from each other within their context in the person's working life.

Collaborative Employment Placement and Training

Redefining the Role of Educational and Vocational Services Agencies

In utilizing natural supports in the workplace "the role of the vocational service agency should be to identify and facilitate natural supports rather than to supplant them" (Nisbet & Hagner, 1988, p. 264). This new natural support role for agencies would, seemingly, require that the agency discretely guide the employment process in a facilitative consultant role as a resource to each person's collaborative employment placement and training (CEPT) team. Such a resource role requires that the agency (a) have a secure knowledge of best practices in ecological assessment, systematic instruction, and maintenance of job performance; (b) be able to convey best practices in an understandable manner to other team members; (c) have the flexibility to assist team members in adapting best practices into simple, usable procedures which fit the natural environment; (d) facilitate, rather than direct, the natural support activities of team members; and (e) maintain a comprehensive knowledge of local, state, and national resources that may be available to each CEPT team.

Figure 1 illustrates the CEPT process via a sequence of activities which provide a framework for implementing CEPT team developed assessment and instructional procedures. Suggestions for conducting CEPT activities are as follows.

Insert Figure 1 about here

Facilitating Employment

In determining job preference the educational or vocational services agency should ask the following three questions: (a) will the

individual like the job?; (b) are there natural supports at the workplace sufficient to help the individual sustain employment?; and (c) does the family support and value this activity? Indeed, by failing to adequately answer these questions it is possible that the person will fail to survive on the enthusiasm of the employer and the agency. The person's verbal comments and/or the written accounts of previous vocational experiences should provide information about the person's job preferences. Job try outs using situational assessments (Moon, et al., 1990), in which the person can sample an array of different job types for experiences of one half day or longer, will provide information about the person's likes and dislikes as well as a preliminary determination of entering job skills. What about the "vibes" in the work place? Is everyone so regimented and separated in their job duties that providing assistance to a coworker is not possible? Is the workplace a flexible environment with some necessary ingredients, e.g., humor, friendliness, helpfulness, even pace? What vocations do family and friends value? Some professional parents have a hard time accepting that their son/daughter wants to be a janitor. Some families have ingrained low expectations that the person will never participate in more than a day activity program. In either case the person and their family must be involved in vocational choice and must honestly discuss their son's/daughter's vocational future...Don't rush or force them!

Job Development and CEPT Team Composition

When developing potential jobs, the educational or vocational services agency determines whether employers and families (or their designates) are willing to participate on a collaborative employment placement and training team to develop and implement a program of instruction and long term supervision for the individual to be employed. If the employer only wants a giveaway (free funding and employee training with no involvement), the agency should find another employer. The agency should also attempt to determine the

degree of commitment each team member may demonstrate, their relationship to the specific job and the person, their long term availability, and their ability to perform possible roles in the person's training and supervision. If necessary, the agency can request that the employer and/or family designate someone to act on their behalf on the team. Such a designation may be particularly appropriate should the employer be somewhat removed from the actual employment situation, in which case an immediate supervisor or responsible coworker can be a more appropriate team member. In cases where the person's parents work and are not available to attend meetings or work closely in training, perhaps a sibling or family friend can be designated, or an advocacy agency can become involved with close interaction with the family and the collaborative employment placement and training team.

Figure 2, CEPT Team Composition, illustrates the potential involvement of a variety of persons on a CEPT team, ranging from persons who provide direct training to those who facilitate funding and/or provide technical expertise. Although a core CEPT team is composed of the individual, his family and friends, her employer/supervisor or coworker, and teacher/adult agency professional, other persons can play a peripheral role and can be invited to participate in CEPT team meetings when necessary. Thus, team composition focuses on the needs of the individual and job site by maximizing the potential involvement of a wide range of resources as determined by a CEPT team engaged in the following activities.

Insert Figure 2 about here

The First CEPT Team Meeting

After the person's job placement is identified, an initial collaborative employment placement and training team meeting

should be conducted with the person, the employer or representative, the parent(s) or designate, and a representative from the vocational services agency in attendance. During the first team meeting (prior to actual placement) the team establishes preliminary roles and responsibilities for each team member, such as having the person in charge of appropriate grooming; parents charged with overseeing mobility; coworker to provide training in conjunction with the agency; supervisor to provide reinforcement and supervision, etc. During the initial meeting the team will develop a preliminary job analysis and identify additional skills that will be necessary for job success, such as mobility, time, money, etc. The team will designate an initial assessment period (e.g., one to two weeks) during which the person starts on the job, and agency staff are assigned to facilitate initial training and further determine the person's training needs. During the initial meeting the team will also develop a preliminary determination of outside resource needs (adaptive aides, speech/communication specialist, job adaptation, physical therapist, job coach, attendant care, etc.), and develop a plan for funding (IRWE, PASS, JTPA, VR, etc.) and recruiting outside resources (local agencies, friends, etc.).

Conducting the Initial Assessment

The initial assessment will be conducted by agency staff working closely with the employer/supervisor/coworker and family. The primary purposes of the initial assessment are to ascertain student training needs, and provide initial training and support for the natural supporters involved in instruction and follow-up support. During this period, different job training strategies can be tried, adaptations developed, and coworker linkages developed. Perhaps the most beneficial aspect of the initial assessment is the opportunity to work with coworkers in arranging tasks, providing model teaching, and establishing initial coworker roles in student instruction and support. It is intended that, during the initial assessment, agency staff will do a

minimum of actual hands-on instruction, rather working with the coworkers and supervisor who provide instruction. This entails assisting coworkers/supervisors in flexing their schedules to provide instruction, prompting coworkers/supervisors to provide tasks that they may not have considered for the student, and developing user/reader friendly teaching and data strategies with the coworkers/supervisor. This one to two week period is also a valuable time in which to train or procure the student's transportation while developing a working rapport with supervisors, coworkers, and family members.

Developing and Implementing a Job Training Plan

Immediately following the assessment period, a second collaborative employment placement and training team meeting is held, at which time written plans for training job skills and other skills are developed. In analysing job skills, CEPT teams should use the employer's information, procedures, and forms as much as possible, and use the family's information when designing mobility programs, grooming programs, making lunch, etc. Ongoing assessment should be designed to be as simple and nonintrusive as possible (e.g. frequency/event checklists at the end of the day, permanent product records, etc.) and should include employers, coworkers, and family members in ongoing assessment and data analysis.

If the team feels that outside resources are necessary, the team should establish timelines for fading the resources, develop mechanisms for including family members, coworkers, and supervisors in the training, and establish a data-based criterion for withdrawal of training procedures. A team meeting should be scheduled to discuss fading of instruction or assistance when the timelines are attained.

The CEPT team may also develop a "plan B" when necessary for reasons of safety, lowered production, possible social interaction

problems, etc. The team can designate roles and responsibilities in plan B and identify possible program changes. Teams should be certain to take all of the team members' concerns, real or imagined, into account, discuss them openly and develop strategies for dealing with team determined legitimate concerns using concrete procedures that are as simple as possible to implement.

Job Retention and Follow-up Support

Early in the process, before the person achieves training criteria, the collaborative employment placement and training team should begin developing a long term support strategy for the person with considerations for job retraining, behavior management, job changes or promotions, continued supervision, provision of adult agency support for the transitioning high school student, etc. As time passes the person's support needs will evolve and, through early attention to those needs, strategies can be developed that incorporate naturally occurring supports and a minimum of outside assistance, yet such outside assistance should be designated and readily available.

CEPT teams should schedule regular meetings to discuss the individual's progress (from all perspectives), share what works, and support/reinforce each other's team roles. By scheduling meetings on a regular basis the team can avoid a crisis management approach, and proactively address potential problems and reinforce success. Such regular meetings will also accommodate continued communication and permit further sharing of roles and responsibilities.

Lifelong Learning

As time passes the CEPT team can enlarge to allow participation of new members who have become the person's friends, new supervisor, coworkers, community living staff, etc. This gradually expanding "circle of friends" (O'Brien, 1987) can also expand the scope of the CEPT

team beyond the workplace to include residential issues, recreation/leisure activities, community living concerns (e.g. banking, shopping), or perhaps involvement in adult education. Indeed, such an evolution of the CEPT team can provide ongoing fresh insights and lifelong learning opportunities for all of the CEPT team members.

Conclusion

This collaborative employment placement and training structure is not intended to be a rigid set of procedures but, rather, a flexible format for developing and implementing team determined strategies for training and supporting a person with severe disabilities in an employment setting. Each CEPT team will be driven by the person's needs and the individual perspectives, roles, and responsibilities of the team's members, thus, in many cases, the differences between overall team functions between teams are likely to outweigh the similarities.

In the CEPT concept, the role of the educational or vocational services agency changes from that of a provider of services to that of a facilitative consultant, initially facilitating the CEPT structure and serving as a resource to other team members. Thus, the agency does not initially provide any promises, paperwork, funding, or personnel for direct intervention. Rather, the CEPT team defines their individual and collective roles and responsibilities, develops training plans, and subsequently determines the outside resources necessary to augment the resources the team can provide. This does not necessarily preclude the potential role of the job coach or other outside resource, should the team feel that such an outside resource is necessary. Rather it provides a structure for determining the function and schedule of the outside resource, and permits team data analysis concerning the ongoing necessity of the outside resource.

In implementing a flexible CEPT structure, the emphasis of the agency will need to change from that of providing direct services, personnel, and funding, to that of providing instructional expertise to supplement the expertise and experience of the employer, family, and

other significant persons on the team. This change implies that agencies will need to shift from an emphasis on personnel management, budgeting, client services, and program management to an emphasis on acquiring knowledge of and keeping abreast of best practices and resources in order to assist in development and implementation of placement, training, and follow-up strategies in an effective manner. Within this new context, the agency may or may not have to: (a) provide team and staff training on instructional strategies; (b) develop and provide training materials; (c) individually coach coworkers, mentors, or family members; and/or (d) supplement team developed materials with best practice methods of task analysis, ongoing assessment, and data analysis.

In essence the CEPT structure is intended to utilize the insights, expertise, and experience of non human service persons to the maximum extent possible. This draws upon the expertise of the employer, supervisor, and/or coworkers in developing assessment, training, and ongoing supervision strategies. Indeed, an experienced supervisor or coworker will know the intricacies of the job far better than an agency employment specialist or job coach who has set out to task analyse the novel job tasks and customs peculiar to the specific workplace. Similarly, the intimate knowledge and experience of family members and friends provide foundations for development of work related interventions which will best fit the individual. These team members will also perform vital functions in providing transportation, mobility training, community instruction, domestic instruction etc., related to the person's role as a worker.

Finally, the collaborative employment placement and training structure should be considered a flexible means of evolving the natural and external supports necessary to develop and maintain a quality working life for persons with severe disabilities. In allowing the structure to evolve, the potential exists for each team's expansion into home and community life, and for the eventual withdrawal of participation of the educational or vocational services agency. Thus,

this potential can provide the opportunity for vocational services professionals to "work themselves out of a job" (Gold, 1982), at least in the context of participation on a particular person's collaborative employment placement and training team.

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Figure 1, Collaborative Employment Placement and Training Team Process

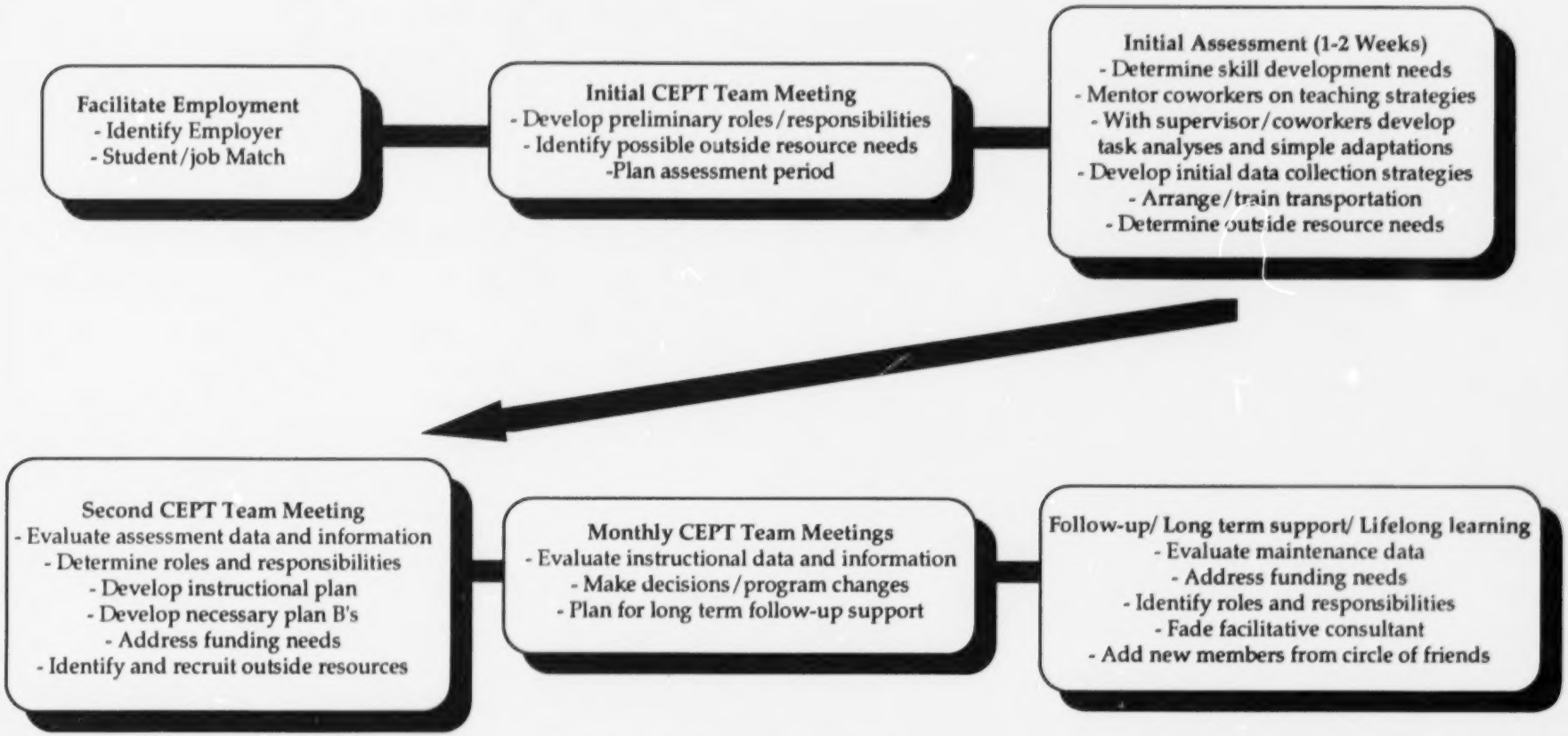
Facilitate Employment
- Identify Employer
- Student/job Match
Initial CEPT Team Meeting
- Develop preliminary roles/responsibilities
- Identify possible outside resource needs
-Plan assessment period
Initial Assessment (1-2 Weeks)
- Determine skill development needs
- Mentor coworkers on teaching strategies
- With supervisor/coworkers develop task analyses and simple adaptations
- Develop initial data collection strategies
- Arrange/train transportation
- Determine outside resource needs
Second CEPT Team Meeting
- Evaluate assessment data and information
- Determine roles and responsibilities
- Develop instructional plan
- Develop necessary plan B's
- Address funding needs
- Identify and recruit outside resources
Monthly CEPT Team Meetings
- Evaluate instructional data and information
- Make decisions/program changes
- Plan for long term follow-up support
Follow-up/ Long term support/ Lifelong learning
- Evaluate maintenance data
- Address funding needs
- Identify roles and responsibilities
- Fade facilitative consultant
- Add new members from circle of friends

Figure 2, Collaborative Employment Placement and Training (CEPT)Team Composition